

Mother Tongue Other Tongue

Linguistic Award for young Edinburgh Poets



The multilingual talents of budding young poets from two Edinburgh schools were celebrated at a prestigious award ceremony in Glasgow.

Students from The Royal High School and George Heriot's used their language skills to create and share poetry for this year's Mother Tongue Other Tongue multilingual poetry competition. Éva Tallaron, Ayesha Mujeb and Nadya Clarkson were highly commended in the Mother Tongue category. Winners received their prizes from Jackie Kay on the main Piazza stage at the SEC on Saturday 11 March 2017 as part of the wider Languages Show Live Scotland event. Their work is published in an anthology.

Mother Tongue Other Tongue is an exciting project which celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity through creative writing and showcases the many languages used by children and young people across Scotland, in school and at home. The competition is organised by SCILT, Scotland's National Centre for Languages, based at University of Strathclyde. Jackie Kay is the patron of the competition. This year, over 200 entries were submitted from pupils across Scotland.

One teacher said of the event: "Taking part in the Mother Tongue Other Tongue poetry competition was a very worthwhile endeavour. Pupils really enjoyed creating poems in another language and interesting language based discussions were generated. The emphasis on celebrating all languages from across the globe was a great message to share with pupils and they especially enjoyed mixing their own language with the

languages they are learning at school. We will definitely be taking part again next year.”

Whilst one of the pupils summed up their feelings: “I feel happy, proud and special.”

Fhiona Mackay, Director of SCILT, says: “Mother Tongue Other Tongue is a celebration of the many languages that are spoken and learned by children and young people across Scotland. The collection of their poems weaves a rich tapestry of voices that honours cultural diversity and pays testament to the wealth of Scotland’s many languages and cultures. We were delighted to see such a high calibre of entries this year, submitted in 35 different languages. Our congratulations go to the winners and to all who took part in the competition.”

Mother Tongue invites children who do not speak English as a first language to write a poem, rap or song in their mother tongue and share their inspiration. Other Tongue encourages children learning another language in school to use that language creatively with an original poem, rap or song in that other tongue. Prizes are awarded in both categories.

Mother Tongue Other Tongue supports the Scottish Government initiative, ‘Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 approach’ by allowing pupils to apply their language learning in a creative way. The competition provides children who do not have English as their first language an opportunity to celebrate their mother tongue.

The targets laid out in the Scottish Attainment Challenge are about achieving equity in educational outcomes, with a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. One of the key drivers is improved literacy. Through reflecting on poetry in their mother tongue and creating poetry in another tongue, learners are developing their literacy skills.

Mother Tongue Other Tongue is supported by the University Council for Modern Languages Scotland, creative writer Juliette Lee and the Scottish Poetry Library.

Details of the winners and the anthology will be published on the [SCILT website](#).